

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (canceled).
2. (canceled).
3. (canceled).
4. (canceled).
5. (new): A method for producing fermented milk, which comprises reducing a dissolved oxygen concentration in a mix of raw materials for fermented milk at the start of fermentation to 5 ppm or less by substitution with an inert gas, and carrying out fermentation at a fermentation temperature of from 30 to 37°C.
6. (new): The method for producing fermented milk according to claim 5, wherein a fermentation time is shortened than a fermentation time of a conventional method at the fermentation temperature.
7. (new): A fermented milk, which has more excellent properties in smooth texture on tongue, mild taste and rich taste than conventional fermented milk obtained by long-term fermentation at low temperature, and a hardness with which a texture can be maintained at distribution stage.
8. (new): The fermented milk produced by the method according to claim 5, which has more excellent properties in smooth texture on tongue, mild taste and rich taste than conventional fermented milk obtained by long-term fermentation at low temperature, and a hardness with which a texture can be maintained at distribution stage.

9. (new): The fermented milk produced by the method according to claim 6, which has more excellent properties in smooth texture on tongue, mild taste and rich taste than conventional fermented milk obtained by long-term fermentation at low temperature, and a hardness with which a texture can be maintained at distribution stage.

10. (new): A fermented milk, which has a penetration angle of 31° or less and a hardness of 40 g or more, wherein the hardness is an elasticity until break of the penetration angle curve obtained by a measurement of the penetration angle of a yogurt knife with a weight of 100 g using a neocurd meter, and the penetration angle is an indicator of smoothness.

11. (new): The fermented milk produced by the method according to claim 5, which has a penetration angle of 31° or less and a hardness of 40 g or more, wherein the hardness is an elasticity until break of the penetration angle curve obtained by a measurement of the penetration angle of a yogurt knife with a weight of 100 g using a neocurd meter, and the penetration angle is an indicator of smoothness.

12. (new): The fermented milk produced by the method according to claim 6, which has a penetration angle of 31° or less and a hardness of 40 g or more, wherein the hardness is an elasticity until break of the penetration angle curve obtained by a measurement of the penetration angle of a yogurt knife with a weight of 100 g using a neocurd meter, and the penetration angle is an indicator of smoothness.